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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 OTTAWA 001007

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/05/2013

TAGS: [PARM](#) [PREL](#) [CVIS](#) [CA](#) [IR](#) [CBW](#)

SUBJECT: (C) IRANIAN SCIENTIST OF CBW CONCERN IN CANADA

REF: STATE 270366

Classified By: POL M/C Brian Flora. Reason 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Polmiloff met April 5 with Foreign Affairs Canada Acting Director for Arms Control and Nonproliferation Marina Laker, at the latter's request, to discuss Iranian national Mehdi Arbabi Ghanhroudi, currently in Canada on a one-year work permit that will expire 04 July 2005. In addition to her verbal summary, Laker handed over a classified non-paper, the text of which is included at para 4.

12. (S) Laker prefaced her comments by noting that the U.S. and Canada have enjoyed an excellent information-exchange relationship with regard to Iranian proliferation activities. Not only have there been regular exchanges between intelligence services, she said, our governments collaborate closely in the context of CBW and nuclear non-proliferation regimes. Laker stated that because of its diplomatic presence in Tehran, the GOC has been in a position to contribute value-added information on Iran. Moreover, Canadian government monitoring of Iran and Iranians (including visa applicants) in general had intensified following the torture and murder by Iranian secret police of a Canadian journalist in 2003. For these reasons, the GOC found the second-to-last bullet in the USG demarche somewhat "odd" as it suggested a lack of understanding of the depth of Canada's commitment to halting CBW proliferators.

13. (S) In the case of Dr. Mehdi Arbadi Ghanhroudi, Laker said the Canadian government had no/no evidence to support that the National Research Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (NRCGEB) in Iran was involved in BW related activities, or that an individual affiliated with NRCGEB was involved in such activities. The Canadian government had determined that Arbadi Ghanhroudi's line of research at Canada's NRC-IBS did not have BW applications. Finally, Arbadi Ghanhroudi's application for a work permit and his credentials were thoroughly vetted by Canadian authorities prior to issuance of the one-year work permit.

4, (C) TEXT OF Canadian non-paper:

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-- The Canadian government was made aware of the United States' concern with Dr. Mehdi Arbadi Ghanhroudi (an Iranian scientist) in relation to his past affiliation with the National Research Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (NRCGEB) in Iran, in November 2004.

-- The Canadian government issued Dr. Ghanhroudi a work permit valid until 2005/07/04.

-- He is currently working at the National Research Council Institute for Biological Sciences (NRC-IBS), where he is conducting research on the Campylobacter antibody project. The Campylobacter bacterium is very fragile and hence unsuited to biological warfare applications.

-- Dr. Ghanhroudi received recommendations for this position from his PhD supervisor at the VUB University in Brussels, Belgium as well as from the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases in Bethesda, Maryland.

-- Dr. Ghanhroudi was initially offered a position at the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases in Bethesda, Maryland.

-- The Canadian government has no intelligence information indicating that the NRCGEB is involved in BW related activities.

-- The Canadian government maintains that there is no reason to suspect an individual affiliated with the NRCGEB as being involved in BW activities.

-- Canada's visa application and vetting process is very thorough and fully responds to the Canadian government's non-proliferation commitments and obligations, including our legally binding obligations under domestic and international law.

-- The government follows the highest standards for visa

screening. It was noted at the 2003 Australia Group annual plenary that, in some cases, Canada's visa screening procedures and practices were implemented some years before many Australia Group partners.

-- The Canadian government will not pursue this matter further unless new security information is forthcoming.

-- Canada welcomes, and would in fact recommend, a strengthened exchange between our intelligence agencies in order to deal with these types of issues.

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